

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SCI-06

PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 L-03 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 INR-10

IO-13 NSAE-00 SCEM-02 PA-03 PRS-01 DODE-00 EB-11

COME-00 RSR-01 /123 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2939

INFO NASA WASHDC INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

NASA GSFC GREENBELT MD CODE 852 & 802

COMSC WASHDC

COMSCLANT BROOKLYN NY

COMSCO PT CANAVERAL FLA

USNS VANGUARD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5286

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCLR, TSPA, AR

SUBJ: SKYLAB/VANGUARD COOPERATION WITH ARGENTINA

1. SUMMARY. POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF NASA'S VANGUARD TRACKING SHIP FROM MAR DEL PLATA NAVAL BASE TO OFF-SHORE OPERATION IS NOT COVERED BY EXISTING AGREEMENT AND COULD GIVE RISE TO MISUNDERSTANDINGS. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT SHIP BE RELOCATED ONLY IF CLEARLY NECESSARY TECHNICALLY, AND THAT EMBASSY BE AUTHORIZED PROMPTLY TO SEEK GOA AGREEMENT TO OFF-SHORE MODE OF OPERATION. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED BY NASA VANGUARD STATION DIRECTOR THAT RADIO FREQUENCY INTERFERENCE PROBLEMS MAY REQUIRE REMOVAL OF USNS VANGUARD FROM PRESENT LOCATION AT PIER IN MAR DEL PLATA NAVAL BASE AND OPERATION AT SEA BEYOND RANGE OF LAND-BASED SOURCES OF INTERFERENCE. ACCORDING TO STATION DIRECTOR, SHIP IS TO BE READY TO GO TO SEA BY AUGUST 1.

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3. EMBASSY APPRECIATES IMPORTANCE OF OBTAINING MAXIMUM RETURNS FROM SKYLAB DATA, BUT MUST POINT OUT THAT OPERATION OF USNS VANGUARD IN PROPOSED OFF-SHORE MODE IS NOT COVERED BY AGREEMENT BETWEEN NASA AND ARGENTINE SPACE COMMISSION OF NOVEMBER 29, 1972, WHICH CONSTITUTES LEGAL BASIS FOR VANGUARD'S PRESENCE IN ARGENTINA. ACCORDING TO STATION DIRECTOR, IF OFF-SHORE OPERATION IS DECIDED UPON, SHIP WOULD OPERATE JUST OVER HORIZON FROM COAST ABOUT 25 MILES OFF-SHORE. THUS, WHILE VANGUARD WOULD BE OUTSIDE TERRITORIAL WATERS, AS VIEWED BY US, IT WOULD BE WELL WITHIN ARGENTINA'S TERRITORIAL WATERS AS DEFINED BY GOA. MOREOVER, SHIP WOULD CONTINUE TO BE PROVISIONED FROM MAR DEL PLATA, MANY TECHNICAL PERSONNEL WOULD MAINTAIN TEMPORARY RESIDENCES WHICH THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED THERE, AND, SHIP WOULD CONTINUE TO RELY ON SPECIAL CUSTOMS ARRANGEMENTS GRANTED BY GOA UNDER AGREEMENT CITED ABOVE FOR ESSENTIAL FLOW OF TECHNICAL SUPPLIS AND RETURN OF DATA.

4. IN LIGHT THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT ESSENTIAL TO OBTAIN PRIOR AGREEMENT OF ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES TO OFF-SHORE MODE OF OPERATION. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THIS CAN PROBABLY BE ACCOMPLISHED INFORMALLY, BUT THAT WE MUST BE PREPARED TO MAKE APPROPRIATE AMENDMENT TO NASA-CNIE AGREEMENT IF GOA CONSIDERS THIS NECESSARY. IN SEEKING AGREEMENT TO MODIFIED OPERATING PLAN, WE WOULD OF COURSE BASE REQUEST ON CONTINUE USE OF LAND BASED FACILITISE IN ARGENTINA, AND WOULD MAKE NO REFERENCE TO MATTER OF JURISDICTION OVER WATERS WHERE VANGUARD WILL OPERATE.

5. WHILE WE NOT NOT ANTICIPATE OBJECTIONS TO MODIFICATION OF ARRANGEMENT, EITHER FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY, TO COVER OFF-SHORE OPERATION, VANGUARD PRESENCE AT MAR DEL PLATA HAS, AS DEPT. AND NASA AWARE, ATTRACTED SOME ADVERSE ATTENTION, INCLUDING FORMAL REQUEST ON PART OF ONE MEMBER OF CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES FOR REVIEW OF SHIP'S ACTIVITIES. WE ARE SATISFIED THAT CRITICISM OF SHIP'S PRESENCE, INCLUDING DEPUTY'S INQUIRY, REPRESENT PERSONAL INITIATIVES. MOREOVER, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER INSTALLATION OF ELECTED GOVERNMENT, GOA HAS BEEN FULLY COOPERATIVE AND FULFILLED ALL OBLIGATIONS OF AGREEMENT, AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. HOWEVER, CHANGE

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IN MODE OF OPERATION WILL PUT PRESENT GOVERNMENT INTO POSITION OF HAVING TO ENDORSE, THROUGH MODIFICATION, AN AGREEMENT WHICH, UP TILL NOW, IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO REGARD AS "FAIT ACCOMPLI".

6. ADDITIONAL FACTOR WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IS THAT OFF-SHORE OPERATION WILL IN PRACTICE COMPLICATE PROVISIONS OF NASA-CNIE AGREEMENT WHICH PROVIDE FOR ARGENTINE OBSERVERS AND TRAINEES ABOARD SHIP. WHILE THESE PROVISIONS

HAVE NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO SIGNIFICANT DEGREE, DESPITE REPEATED EMBASSY EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE ARGENTINE INTEREST IN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES (A SMALL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR ARGENTINE TELEPHONE COMPANY PERSONNEL IS NOW BEGINNING), WE REGARD THESE PROVISIONS, AND THE ABILITY TO APPLY THEM IN PRACTICE AS POLITICALLY IMPORTANT. OFF-SHORE OPERATION WILL ALSO CUT DOWN ON EXTENSIVE PROGRAM OF VISITS TO BANGUARD. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SHIP WOULD PROBABLY RETURN TO SHORE FOR SEVERAL DAYS EACH MONTH UNDER NEW MODE OF OPERATION, WHICH WOULD ALLOW CONTINUATION OF VISIT PROGRAM ON THESE OCCASIONS AND WOULD URGE THAT PERIODIC SHORE VISITS BE MADE IF OFF-SHORE OPERATION IS DECIDED UPON.

7. FINALLY, REMOVAL OF VANGUARD FROM MAR DEL PLATA, NO MATTER HOW WELL JUSTIFIED ON TECHNICAL GROUNDS, IS LIKELY TO GENERATE RUMORS AND MISUNDERSTANDING, GIVEN PROPENSITIES OF ARGENTINE SOCIETY IN THIS DIRECTION. THESE MAY VARY FROM COMPLAINTS THAT US DISSATISFIED WITH ARGENTINE COOPERATION TO ACCUSATIONS THAT SHIP WILL BE ABLE TO ESCAPE ARGENTINE SURVEILLANCE AND CONDUCT CLANDESTINE ACTIVITIES AT SEA, AN ACTIVITY OF WHICH IT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACCUSED WHILE IN PORT.

8. FOR THESE REASONS, EMBASSY PREFERENCE FROM OVERALL POLITICAL VIEWPOINT, WOULD BE TO LEAVE VANGUARD OPERATION AND AGREEMENT UNCHANGED. WE HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT NEED FOR OFF-SHORE OPERATION WILL BE THOROUGHLY JUSTIFIED TECHNICALLY BEFORE BEING DECIDED UPON AND REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS AUTHORIZING EMBASSY TO SEEK NECESSARY GOA AGREEMENT TO THIS MODE OF OPERATION. IN VIEW AUGUST 1 DATE ON WHICH THIS OPERATION MAY BEGIN, INSTRUCTIONS SHOULD BE RECEIVED SOONEST IF DELAY IN OPERATIONS TO BE AVOIDED.

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